

Motorcycle Safety Foundation

Topical Module # 37

Mentoring and Being Mentored:

Creating and Maintaining a

Culture of Personal Leadership

Toward Motorcycle Safety

Topic and General Time

The topic for this Topical Module is mentoring and being mentored. The goal is to support a culture of personal leadership toward motorcycle safety. Personal leadership in this context means that each motorcyclist makes a personal commitment to making safe riding decisions. Each rider is to become her or his own "personal leader"; that inner voice to make safety a core value of utmost importance. The person in the "helper" role (the mentor) must possess specific qualities, characteristics and attitudes in order to be effective. The person in the learning role (the mentee) needs to fulfill certain responsibilities and approach the learning with a positive and open attitude. Deficits by either the mentor or mentee will result in less than maximum learning.

The time for the core learning activity is approximately 45 minutes. Additional time will be necessary to address the specific mentor/mentee responsibilities of the sponsoring organization.

General Goal

The general goal of this session is to establish a positive relationship between the mentor and mentees, establish an expectation of enjoyable and productive learning, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and mentees. Three primary areas will be addressed: (1) the role and responsibilities of the mentor (2) the need for the mentees to approach the process with an "open to learning" attitude and a willingness to reflect on new knowledge and (3) a commitment by mentors to give their best and by mentees to practice and apply the new knowledge to their riding. The goal is to identify and discuss the role of the mentor, the role of the mentee and the learning environment in which they will function.

Specific Objectives

Specific objectives of this topical module include but are not limited to the following:

- Name the four categories of desirable qualities of an effective mentor
- Describe the skills included in each category
- Identify the general purposes of the mentor/mentee program
- Describe the reflective process
- List the steps of the cycle of learning
- Describe the specific responsibilities required by the sponsoring organization

Materials and Items Needed

Materials needed for this session (in addition to common materials) include:

1. Desirable Qualities of an Effective Mentor (handout)
2. Desirable Qualities of an Effective Mentor (explanation)
3. Components of an Environment of Learning (handout)
4. Components of an Environment of Learning (explanation)
5. Cycle of Learning (handout)
6. A Tail of Two Riders

Learning Activity "A"

This Topical Module may be one of the more difficult modules to maintain engaged involvement of the participants because the participants are likely to have little information about the topic. Most sessions focus on a motorcycling topic and participants will come with background knowledge but many will not have knowledge or experience in a mentoring process. It is therefore vital that the facilitator (mentor) work hard at limiting his/her talk time and take every opportunity to maximize participant reflection and processing time.

Action Steps:

1. Introduce self and participants
2. State the Topical Module goal and purpose of the session
3. Distribute (or display) the four (4) Categories of Desirable Qualities of an Effective Mentor
4. Explain that these qualities describe your role and responsibilities (as mentor or facilitator). Ask small groups (3-5 participants) to brainstorm possible characteristics in each of the four areas. You may do this one category at a time or work on all four categories at one time.
5. Ask small groups to report and chart responses
6. Discuss - assist mentees in their processing of this information
7. Distribute or display completed list and note any areas not previously discussed. Note again that this information describes your role as mentor
8. Distribute or display the Components of an Environment of Learning
9. Lead an interactive discussion of these components. Ask mentees to describe their definitions/meanings of the components. Clarify as necessary. Ensure that mentees understand that this provides a description of the nature/ingredients of the mentor/mentee process.
10. Provide a mini-summary as follows (1) Role of the mentor as identified by the Desirable Qualities of an Effective Mentor (2) The nature of the learning we will strive for as identified by the Components of an Environment of Learning (3) The remaining area is to discuss the participant's mentees role.
11. Ask mentees (participants) to brainstorm descriptions of their role. You may do this in broad terms or ask mentees to brainstorm answers to specific questions such as: "How will you learn - what will be the process?" "What will you do?" "What will be your responsibility given that you are now aware of (a) the components of an environment learning and (b) the role I will have as your mentor
12. Provide time, ask for reports, chart results
13. Distribute "Cycle of Learning" and connect this model to the responses received during the previous brainstorming session - to the charted responses from step # 11
14. High-light the need for participants to:
 - Be open to new ideas
 - Make a plan for practicing new ideas and skills
 - Practice
 - Reflect - by thinking, talking with others (maybe at the next Topical Module session) and journal writing
 - Repeating the process
15. Provide a Summary - "If I (mentor/facilitator) do my job (as described by Desirable Qualities) and you (participants/mentees) do your job (by following the steps of the "cycle of learning") then together we'll build a learning community focused on improving our

- riding safety."
16. Have participants complete the "MSF Topical Module Presentation - Rider Feedback and Evaluation Form"
 17. Reference the next Topical Module session date and time if known
 18. Closure activity

Evaluation

In step number sixteen (16) from the above listed action steps the participants completed the "MSF Topical Module Presentation - Rider Feedback and Evaluation Form." You should review these forms and note any information that will assist you in presenting future Topical Modules. Make copies of these forms for your records if you desire or your sponsor requires. Complete the MSF Topical Module Evaluation Form (for facilitators). As has been noted in this topical module, significant learning comes from reflecting on our experiences, so put some thought into answering the questions on this form. Reflecting on your presentation will be valuable for your learning and MSF needs your feedback. Send the group of participant feedback forms along with your completed evaluation form to MSF.

Learning Activity B

Action Steps

1. Introductions and state of goal and objectives
2. Introduce "A Tail of Two Riders."
3. Assign one participant to read the description of James (paragraphs 1-4) and a second participant to read the description of Sean (paragraph 5 to the end)
4. Facilitate a discussion that focuses on
 - Sean's attitude about learning compared to James (use "Cycle of Learning" to high-light some of the steps and actions Sean's exhibits)
 - How Norm helped Sean (use "Desirable Qualities of an Effective Mentor" to high-light some of the characteristics Norm exhibited)
 - The rider community that Sean became involved in (use "The Environment of Learning" to high-light some of these characteristics).
5. Point out the similarities to the mentor/mentee relationship
6. Summarize - provide the above referenced materials as handouts
7. Reference the next Topical Module session date and time
8. Provide closure and complete the appropriate evaluation forms

Desirable Qualities of an Effective Mentor *

Attitude and Character

Exhibits strong commitment to the profession
Has willingness to be a role model for others
Believes mentoring improves practice/performance
Advocates on behalf of colleagues
Welcomes training to improve lifelong skills
Demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning
Is reflective and able to learn from mistakes
Is eager to share information and ideas with colleagues
Is resilient, flexible, persistent and open-minded
Exhibits good humor and resourcefulness
Enjoys new challenges and solving problems.

Communication Skills

Articulates effective strategies with skill
Listens attentively
Asks questions that prompt reflection and understanding
Offers positive and productive critiques
Uses time efficiently
Covey's enthusiasm and passion for the subject
Maintains confidentiality and discretion

Professional Competence and Experiences

Is regarded by colleagues as an outstanding role model

Has excellent knowledge of the subject matter
Has confidence in his/her own skills
Feels comfortable being observed by others
Maintains a network of professional contacts
Understands the policies and procedures of the organization
Is a meticulous observer of practice
Collaborates well with others
Is willing to learn new strategies from protégés

Interpersonal Skills

Is able to maintain a trusting professional relationship
Knows how to express care for a protégé's emotional and professional needs
Is attentive to sensitive political issues
Works well with individuals from different cultures
Is approachable; easily establishes rapport with others
Is patient

*The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, Fall, 1999

Desirable Qualities of an Effective Mentor

Attitude and Character

Communication Skills

Professional Competence and Experiences

Interpersonal Skills

Cycle of Learning

Introduction: There are many sophisticated theories and models about how we learn but in simple terms; learning is a process of changes that results from integrating new experiences with current knowledge. Some learning takes place without any active attempt on the part of the learner while other learning results from the learner actively striving to gain new knowledge or skills. You want your riders (participants in the Topical Module sessions) to get actively involved in learning new information and practicing new skills. The steps of the "cycle of learning" identified below form a description of the process you want the participants (mentees) to follow. Attending your sessions, going away and forgetting about the material and ideas, and then showing up at the next topical module session, will do little to aid learning or change behavior and attitudes. Mentee need to understand they have a responsibility to plan, practice, reflect (think about and question) and apply the information addressed in each topical module

Plan: A first step (also a final step) in the "cycle" or circle of learning is activity making a plan. The rider (mentee) asks him/herself questions like: "What do I need to learn?" "What do I want to learn?" "How will this learning help me?" "How will I be different after learning this?" "What am I going to do with this new learning after I have acquired it?" The mentee makes a plan to try out the new learning. Beginning topical module sessions by brainstorming with the mentees a couple of questions may help set this planning and responsibility for learning attitude.

- What do I know about this subject?
- What do I think I can learn about this subject or need to learn?

Practice: This is a do it step. It can be said that no learning has actually taken place until the person actually performs or demonstrates new behavior or actions as a result of the new information. Try it out, experiment, and "muck around" with the new ideas or skills. Ending Topical Module sessions by reminding mentees they need to try out and practice the new ideas or skills may help ensure the riders actually do something with the material discussed (*note: we might be stretching the definition of learning if we were to say at this point "do something with the material learned" because we want evidence of changed behavior*). Ask participants how and when they will practice and be sure to remind them to think about (reflect) upon their practice.

Reflect: This is a vital step that is often overlooked. Reflection on practice means thinking about our experience. It is often said that more learning results from thinking about our experience than the actual experience itself. But quality reflection is more than just sitting by yourself and thinking. Two steps in addition to thinking improve reflection. First, is talking. Verbalizing your thoughts with another person is important. In addition to safety, this is a great reason to have a fellow rider with you when you practice - so you have someone to talk with about your thoughts. If that other person is good at asking you questions that force you to new or different viewpoints, all the better. Writing is also very helpful. Keeping a journal or log of your ideas and questions is important. In summary, to really help you learn from a new experience or exposure to new information it is important to (1) think deeply about the experience or knowledge (2) talk with someone about your experience and (3) write about your thinking process. So, riders are exposed to new information during the Topical Module session. They should plan what they want to do with this information, get a riding buddy, writing material and head to a practice area. Run a few practice trials, think and talk about their trials, make some notes and try for improvement.

Apply: This is a "do it again" step. Make a new plan and try it out in revised form. This is a repeat of the initial "plan" and "action" steps meshed together. Reflect on the results (think, talk and write about the results). If you like the results - good. If not or if there is room for improvement, make a new plan and try it out again. Mentors who conduct repeated Topical Module sessions with the same group of mentees can help ensure mentees are using this "cycle of learning" by opening sessions with a time for mentees to report on their progress or practice and application of the previous Topical Module.

The Environment of Learning

- **Reflection on Practice**
- **Collaboration**
- **Self-assessment and self-directed inquiry**
- **A community of learners**
- **Formative Assessment**

The Environment of Learning

Research on the nature of adult and professional learning has established several characteristics that are common to efficient, effective and quality learning experiences. In our mentor/mentee learning program these components describe the environment we want to create. If as mentors we do our job (as described in the Qualities) and the mentees do their job (as described in the Cycle of Learning) then together the learning environment should be characterized by some common elements. Those elements are described here just to provide us (both mentors and mentees) a little clearer picture of what we are striving for.

- **Reflection on Practice**

A prime characteristic of quality learning is the idea of reflection on practice. It is often said that more learning results from reflection on our experience than the actual experience. Quality reflection includes thinking, talking and writing.

- **Collaboration**

Quality learning is often not done in isolation but in collaboration with colleagues. Most adults thrive in social settings and working together toward a common goal or working toward individual goals with the support of colleagues, greatly enhances the chance of success. The new television show "The Biggest Loser" is a great example. All of the participants were successful in losing weight in the supportive, collaborative, social setting of their team but had been repeatedly unsuccessful individually.

- **Self-assessment and self-directed inquiry**

Assessing one's own strengths and weakness and being responsible for directing your own improvement is a vastly superior environment compared to a setting where someone else tells you what you need to improve and assesses your progress. Self-assessment is usually formative assessment. That is, assessment that is ongoing and for the purposes of improvement, learning, or growth as opposed to a one-time assessment to test whether you made the grade.

- **A community of learners**

A community of learners is a community where every member feels learning is important and all members are striving for improvement. Learning is recognized as on-going or life long and each member recognizes that there are many paths to success.

- **Formative Assessment**

A key to growth is formative assessment (as opposed to summative assessment). Formative assessment is on-going and for the purposes of providing the learner with feedback on progress. Summative assessment is usually a one-time event and for the purposes of judging the individual's performance against a standard to determine success or failure, promotion or no promotion, certified or not certified.

A Tail of Two Riders*

The first rider, James bought a used CBR 600 F4I from his friend Jake, who had been riding for many years. James had always wanted to ride and had felt left out when Jake and several other friends went riding. Jake knew James was interested in riding and when he wanted to buy a new bike he approached James about buying his CBR. James didn't really know much about buying bikes but took his buddies word that the CBR was a great bike for beginners.

Jake showed James a few basics about the controls - the old "one down, five up, this is the clutch, this is front brake - be careful about using it, rear brake is down here, just turn the key and push this button and you are ready to fly" routine.

James somehow managed to make it home that first evening after buying the bike and began practicing in a nearby parking lot and then out on the streets.

After about a month James thought he was ready to join Jake and the others for a Sunday morning canyon ride. Five miles into the ride and struggling to keep the others in sight James ran wide on a right hand curve, crossed the center line, narrowly missed an oncoming car and crashed hard into the ditch on the opposite side of the road. Luckily for James he survived with only a broken wrist, broken collarbone and major road-rash and bruises. The bike was a total loss.

The second rider, Sean has a much different experience. Like James he had been interested in riding for many years and like James, Sean had several friends who were riders. Sean approached one of his riding friends, Norm and asked about buying a bike and learning to ride. This is where the road of the tail of two riders heads in different directions.

Norm was delighted that Sean expressed an interest in riding but unlike James friend Jake who dumped his used CBR on his inexperienced buddy, Norm began asking Sean lots of questions. "What kind of riding do you think you would like to do? What types of bikes attract your attention? How much do you want to spend?" Norm interspersed lots of questions with some solid information including "learning from a professional by taking a formal course is the best way to learn" and "start with a used standard design small to medium engine size machine."

Sean and Norm spent the winter months talking and e-mailing about motorcycles and Norm took Sean on several adventures to dealership and to motorcycle shows. Sean took the MSF Basic RiderCourse and eventually settled on a used EX 500 Kawasaki for his first machine. Norm met Sean at the local RiderCourse range and together they practiced the important skills of braking, cornering and obstacle avoidance. Norm was available for answering Sean's questions and Sean seldom noticed that Norm often asked Sean what he thought or what options might work, before giving Sean his opinion.

Sean kept the EX 500 until the middle of his second riding season before purchasing the new BMW he had been dreaming about. Shortly after Sean got the BMW, he and Norm took the MSF Experienced RiderCourse together. Sean has taken several solo trips and two with others riders accumulating more than 22,000 miles in the saddle by the start of his third riding season. He and Norm are considering signing up for a "track school" and Sean is thinking about buying an off-road bike to be able to join Norm and the "Thursday afternoon trail riding group."

Norm was not the only rider helping Sean safely enter the world of motorcycle riding. Sean had the benefit of weekly meetings with other riders. Each Wednesday a group would meet at the beach park for stories and a short ride. Unlike some groups that Sean was aware of, alcohol was never a part of this riding group's agenda - sharing stories, exchanging ideas and enjoying evening rides was the focus.

In a short time Sean was able to identify and embrace the attitudes, expectations, beliefs, habits and skills that make up the culture of these riders. He learned that inquiry and reflection were a part of learning to become a proficient motorcyclist, in addition to riding and practice.

* Adopted from Udelhofen, Susan and Larson, Kathy, (2002) *The Mentoring Year: A Step by Step Guide to Professional Development*, All-Star Publishing, Phoenix, AZ